



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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TO: Chief School Administrators
Charter School Lead Persons

FROM: Jay Doolan, Ed.D., Assistant Commissioner
Division of Educational Standards and Programs

Barbara Gantwerk, Assistant Commissioner
Division of Student Support Services

SUBJECT: Highly Qualified Teacher Requirements—Special Education Teachers

In this memo, we will describe several items regarding the implementation of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Highly Qualified Teacher requirements relevant to novice and veteran special education teachers who must attain highly qualified status. There are three topics that will be discussed:

- Conditions governing the use of the HOUSE matrix for veteran special education teachers;
- Conditions governing the use of the HOUSE matrix for novice special education teachers (IDEA flexibility); and
- Special education teachers instructing students assessed with the Alternate Proficiency Assessment (APA).

Reinstatement of the HOUSE Matrix for Veteran Special Education Teachers

The New Jersey High Objective Uniform Standard of Evaluation (HOUSE) officially expired on June 30, 2007. However, many school districts in New Jersey are currently reconfiguring their schools from self-contained K-8 to K-5 and middle school configurations and need additional flexibility for placement of special education teachers across the grade levels in order to meet the highly qualified teacher requirements. In response to this need, the New Jersey Department of Education wishes to provide additional opportunities to support veteran special education teachers in attaining highly qualified status. Therefore, the department is reinstating the High Objective Uniform Standards of Evaluation matrix for veteran special education teachers teaching in self-contained and departmentalized settings for a time-limited period. The newly reinstated HOUSE will be in effect immediately and will expire June 30, 2010. Please note that this new policy does not in any way change the Individuals with Disabilities Education

Act (IDEA) flexibility rule already in effect for novice special education teachers in the first year of teaching.

The department allows only veteran special education teachers to use the HOUSE until the expiration date noted in the previous paragraph. A veteran teacher is defined as one who has been teaching for one year or more.

As you may know, Congress is considering the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. It is important to recognize that the use of the HOUSE to satisfy highly qualified teacher requirements may or may not be retained in the law. You are advised to be mindful of this contingency as you support both veteran and novice special education teachers in achieving highly qualified status through the HOUSE. You may access the HOUSE documents at www.nj.gov/education/profdev/nclb.

IDEA Flexibility for Novice Special Education Teachers

The department continues to allow novice special education teachers to employ IDEA flexibility. The IDEA flexibility allows novice special education teachers who are highly qualified in language arts literacy, mathematics or science when hired as a special education teacher to have two years from the date of hire to become highly qualified in additional subjects using the HOUSE. This provision applies to the following novice special education teachers:

- Teachers holding the Teacher of the Handicapped (TOH) certificate who may teach multiple content areas in middle or high school (grades 5-12);
- Teachers holding the Teacher of Students with Disabilities (SWD) certificate and the N-8 instructional certificate who may teach middle grades (5-8) in departmentalized settings; and
- Teachers holding the Teacher of Students with Disabilities (SWD) and the K-5 instructional certificate who may teach grade 5 in a departmentalized setting.

Please note that a veteran teacher holding the N-8 or K-5 Elementary Teacher Instructional Certification is considered to be a novice special education teacher if she or he is certified as a Teacher of the Handicapped (TOH) or a Teacher of Students with Disabilities (SWD) and has been assigned to teach special education for the first time. Such a teacher is able to use IDEA flexibility as described in the first paragraph of this section.

Alternate Proficiency Assessment (APA)

Special education teachers, at any grade level, who teach core academic subjects exclusively to students with disabilities whose performance is assessed with the APA may meet the same highly qualified requirements that apply to elementary school teachers. This provision applies to special education teachers instructing special education classes, grades K-12, provided that every student in the class is assessed with the APA.

In all other cases, special education teachers must meet the same highly qualified requirements as general education teachers. That is, special education teachers who provide direct instruction in core academic subjects to students who are expected to take the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK), the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA) or the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) must have the content expertise to instruct to the level of the standards that the assessment measures.

Attached with this memo is the document, Definition of the Highly Qualified Teacher, outlining the fundamental requirements teachers must meet to achieve highly qualified status. You are encouraged to share this document with administrators, teachers and candidates who can benefit from this information. Also, we remind you that this memo is not a comprehensive outline of the highly qualified requirements that pertain to special education teachers. To ensure that you have updated, timely information and are maintaining accurate records, you are encouraged to review the Highly Qualified Teacher web site located at www.nj.gov/education/profdev/nclb for a complete description of the highly qualified requirements and documentation forms.

If you have any questions regarding the Highly Qualified Teacher requirements, please contact Carol Albritton, teacher quality coordinator, at (609) 777-4482 or by e-mailing HQTeachers@doe.state.nj.us.

JD/BG/CP/EAS/CA/S:\Alfie\Highly Qualified Teacher Project\HQT Requirements-Spec. Ed. Teachers.doc

Attachment

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